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AUTHOR Lezotte, Lawrence W.
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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines several policy and program suggestions for improving Connecticut's urban schools which build upon the States's current intiatives and incorporate the current research findings emanating from studies of effective schools. The author first provides a framework for his suggestions by reviewing research to delineate the characteristics of instructionally effective schools. Recommendations for policy and program improvement in Connecticut's schools are based on the following assumptions: (1) individual schools are powerful social systems with norms, beliefs, and values which serve to sustain the social system; and (2) the task of improving urban education is the task of redirecting the social system of individual schools. The author makes recommendations about specific policy issues in the following areas: (1) mission of the schools, (2) efficacy and expectation, (3) instructional leadership, (4) opportunities to learn, and (5) home school support systems. The author points out that because the technology of education is both "soft" and imported from a distance, it is difficult to ensure that intended outcomes actually occur in individual schools. The author concludes, however, that following his recommendations will help bring about improvement of educational achievement levels in urban schools. (MK)

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A CRITICAL ISSUES PAPER PREPARED FOR
THE CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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A POLICY PROSPECTUS FOR IMPROVING URBAN EDUCATION

Prepared by

Lawrence W. Lezotte
Professor, Educational Psychology
and Urban Development
Michigan State University

Prepared for the

Connecticut State Board of Education
Comprehensive Plan for Elementary and Secondary Education

July, 1979

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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"For most of human history men and women have believed that only an elite is worthy and capable of education and that the great mass of people should be trained as hewers of wood and drawers of water, if they are to be trained at all. It was only at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth that popular leaders began to dream of universal school systems that would give everyone a chance to partake of the art and sciences. Not surprisingly, they had their most immediate successes with the children who were easiest to teach — those who through early nurture in the family and other institutions had been prepared for whatever it was that the school had to offer.

"Now in the twentieth century, we have turned to the more difficult task, the education of those at the margins — those who suffer from physical, mental, or emotional handicaps, those who have long been held at a distance by political or social means, and those who for a variety of reasons are less ready for what the schools have to offer and hence are more difficult to teach."

Lawrence A. Cremin
"Public Education" 1976

"The Crises of Public Education lies in the big cities."

Robert J. Havinghurst
"Educational Policy for Large Cities" 1976

"To create urban schools which really teach students, which reflect the pluralism of the society, which serve the quest of social justice — this is a task which will take persistent imagination, wisdom and will."

David Tyack
"The One Best System: The History of American Urban Education" (1974)

The three quotations just presented capture my beliefs about the problems facing public education today. First, I believe the problems of public education center around our ability to respond effectively to the needs of those "who have long been held at a distance by political and social means" — namely the poor and minorities. Second, I believe these problems are most apparent in the urban areas of our country. Third, I believe that these urban problems can be solved if we have the persistance, imagination, wisdom and will required.

I am pleased to have been invited to participate in these important deliberations. I sincerely hope my paper reflects a measure of imagination, widson and will that will accrue to the benefit of Connecticut's urban schools and students.

As background for this paper, I reviewed several documents which, when taken together, provided a comprehensive description of the current state of urban education in Connecticut. My analysis of these documents has lead me to two conclusions: (1) Connecticut's urban educational problems are, by and large, similar to the urban problems faced by most other states; (2) the Connecticut Board of Education has exercised leadership and initiated a number of reforms and innovative programs which, in my judgment, are moving, or will move the state in the direction of solving these seemingly intractable urban educational problems.

The major urban education problems that command our attention concern the level of educational attainment of the students in the urban schools as well as the general "quality of life present in urban schools. Two questions seem most paramount. First, is it feasible to expect that the students, especially the poor and minority, served by these urban schools to demonstrate an acceptable level of educational achievement especially in the basic survival skills required by our society?, and (2) can urban schools operate in a safe and satisfying manner for all involved – students, staff and other school personnel? For me the answer to both these questions is a resounding "yes"!

Let me reiterate that, like Professor Cremin, I recognize the difficulty of the task for it is indeed true that while not all the students who are "more difficult to teach" reside in urban areas, a disproportionately large number do. Further, I agree with Professor Havinghurst and, in my opinion, the long run survival of public education as we know it today is dependent on our ability to meet the challenge of successfully educating those in the urban places. Finally, I believe we can meet the challenge, not by one universal cure-all, but rather by a series of demanding steps.

My paper outlines several policy and program suggestions which 1) build upon the state's current initiatives and 2) incorporates the current research findings emanating from studies of effective schools. I have attempted to formulate my suggestions in a manner consistent with the framework which prevails between the Connecticut State Board of Education and the state's local school districts. I hope that my suggestions reflect a sensitivity to the fact that "Historically, the State of Connecticut has chosen to fulfill its obligations to provide education by delegating in statutes a substantial responsibility to local school districts" (Wilder).

Before presenting my suggested policy directions for improving Connecticut's urban schools, I believe it's necessary to review the research on effective schools since it provides the backdrop for my suggestions.

An Overview of Research on Effective Schools

Advocates of urban educational reform have been on the defensive since the *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (EEO) study (Coleman, et al., 1966) reported that "schools don't make a difference." The advocates were further shaken by *Inequality: A Reassessment of the*

Effect of Family and Schooling in America (Jencks, et al., 1972), which in effect concluded that "it doesn't matter that schools don't make a difference." Even ignoring the effect that these major publications had on those outside the educational enterprise, the two documents were devastating to those within. Some urban educators use these documents to explain, if not justify, the low levels of achievement of urban students. Fortunately, urban educational reformers are a persistent and hearty lot and during the last few years have begun gathering a body of rather convincing evidence which indicates that (1) schools do make a difference and (2) low levels of student achievement need not, and indeed should not, be characteristic of urban schools.

Two research strategies have been used to gather this evidence. One strategy attempts to isolate that portion of the student's knowledge and skills which is directly attributable to the school the student attended. As an instrument of urban educational reform, this strategy seeks to prove that further school improvement is possible since the method provides evidence that other schools serving similar student populations have a great impact on student achievement. Except for one example, I will not elaborate on this body of research. A colleague and I recently published a study which reported on twenty inner city schools in Detroit, Michigan. We found that, on the average across all grades (1-6), 16% of the variability in the student's achievement was directly associated with the building attended. Even within this socioeconomically homogeneous set of schools, the student's measured achievement was significantly influenced by the school he or she, by happenstance, attended. We concluded that "schools *do* make a difference" and the particular school one attends makes a rather substantial difference.

The second research strategy used by the urban educational reformers has been to locate and describe schools, that, while serving low socio-economic student populations, are nevertheless instructionally effective in terms of measured pupil performance. This strategy and the resulting research findings have been most informative because (1) a number of researchers using a variety of student achievement measures have found schools which are unusually effective in instructing poor (minority and non-minority) students; (2) regardless of the achievement measures used, the descriptions of the "effective schools" seem to converge on several common factors which characterize these schools and (3) many of the common factors can be influenced by policy makers (federal, state or local).

Before proceeding, a word of caution is necessary. While the commulative weight of available evidence is impressive, it is primarily based on descriptive rather than experimental study thus restricting our ability to make statements about cause and effect. I am hopeful that funding agencies, such as the National Institute of Education, will see fit to provide the research dollars required to conduct the much-needed experimental studies. I am equally hopeful that educational policy makers at the state and local levels will develop the necessary policy/program

frameworks suggested and then conduct rigorous evaluations to assess the impacts of their efforts. Our deliberations suggest that Connecticut is at least open to considering such suggestions.

Characteristics of Instructionally Effective Schools

Time does not permit a thorough review of all the relevant studies and unfortunately, a comprehensive synthesis of the intructionally effective school literature is not readily available to my knowledge. Nevertheless, I will attempt to review the most crucial dimensions which I believe would be of most interest to a State Board of Education.

1. *Mission of the School.* One descriptive characteristic of the instructionally effective schools is that the professional staff of those schools have a clear sense of direction as to the essential mission of the school and are committed to that mission. This mission or sense of direction typically derives from two sources: (1) the state or local program goals and priorities and (2) the assessment processes used to measure goal attainments. Why is it necessary for local educators to have this clear sense of purpose? The answer is that teachers have limited time and resources at their disposal and if they are going to be instructionally effective they need to allocate these resources in an efficient manner. For example, if a teacher believes that he/she is expected to teach ten subjects – all equally important – he/she would divide the time and resources in ten equal parts. On the other hand, with a clear sense of purpose which in effect says that all ten subjects are important but three (e.g., basic reading, writing and arithmetic) are most important, it is reasonable to expect that the teacher would make appropriate adjustments in the resource allocations.

To further illustrate this, I would like to describe a study we (*Brookover and Lezotte, 1978*) conducted. In our study, we looked at elementary schools that, without any apparent change in student population, had evidenced a three-year pattern of imporvement or decline in measured achievement. We labeled the two groups of schools as improving or declining.

In this study, we found that the staff in the improving schools accepted the concept of accountability and were further along in developing and implementing an accountability model in their school. They were much more willing to support the importance and relevance of the Michigan Common Goals and accepted the Michigan Educational Assessment Program scores as indicative of attainment of those minimum competency basic skills goals. Furthermore, the staff in the improving schools accepted and emphasized the importance of the basic reading and math objectives that were reflected in the items contained in the Michigan Assessment Instrument.

While these findings lend support for the idea that local school staff must have a clear sense of what essential mission they are expected to perform, a clear statement of goals alone does not account for all the differences between our improving and declining schools. The Michigan Common Goals apply to every school in the state and the Assessment Program tests every student.

Nevertheless it was clear that school staffs, for one reason or another, differed in their awareness and acceptance of these as indicators of the primary missions of the school. We need to consider other dimensions of instructionally effective schools if we wish to understand the differences between effective and ineffective schools. However, don't lose cite of the fact that the professional staff must have shared understanding of and commitment to the goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability generally.

2. *Efficacy and Expectations.* Most of the research studies of instructionally effective schools begin with the underlying theoretical perspective of schools as social systems. In addition to a mission (previously discussed), social systems by definition have shared norms, beliefs, values, role definitions and expectations. The instructionally effective schools, when contrasted with their less effective counterparts, have a different normative system. The effective schools evidenced norms and beliefs which indicate that (1) all their students can master the basic skills they are seeking to teach and (2) the teaching staff believe they have the capacity to provide the required instructional program. It is important to stress that these beliefs and norms characterize the whole staff, not just one or two teachers or the principal. There is a rather extensive research literature on teacher expectations and resulting teacher behaviors. The research clearly reveals that (1) teachers do form different expectations for different students; (2) the expectations influence the instructional interactions between students and teachers, and (3) student achievement gains are correlated with the teachers' expectations. Now, you can see why a belief system for a school staff is so important. The effective schools research finds that the teacher expectations for students reflect the assumption that "all kids can learn."

Again using our most recent study (*Brookover and Lezotte, 1977*) we found that the staff of the improving schools tend to believe that all of their students can master the basic objectives, and furthermore, the teachers believe that the principal shares this belief. As a result, the staff in the improving schools held decidedly higher and apparently increasing levels of expectation for the educational accomplishments of their students.

The importance of the teacher efficacy and teacher expectations dimensions which characterize the social system of an individual school must be emphasized. To the extent that a teacher's instructional actions derive from personal beliefs about ability to teach and the students' ability to learn, the teacher's sense of efficacy and expectations for students becomes a necessary but perhaps not sufficient correlation for the accomplishment of our intended education goals. To illustrate, imagine the many ways that two teachers (one who believes that he/she can teach or that the students will not learn) would differ on such crucial dimensions as planning for instruction, forms of student evaluation and feedback, to mention but a few.

Many of the researchers that have described the effective schools have come to refer to this constellation of beliefs, norms and attitudes as "school social climate." The norms, beliefs, and values which indicate that "the staff believes it has a job to do (mission)" and "they can

and will do it" seems to be very contagious. The students seem to quickly realize that they, too, have a "job to do" and the teachers and others in the school environment believe "the students can do it."

I would like to emphasize two points about teacher expectations and student achievement which are especially critical to urban schools. First, the belief systems described in the effective schools' research stress the notion that *all* -- not a few, not most, but all -- students are expected to learn. Second, the research indicates that effective elementary schools, especially the effective urban elementary schools, stress the achievement in the basic skills. A principal in one or our improving schools, an urban school made up of nearly all black and poor students, said that he has told his staff that every instructional decision a teacher makes should consider the question "How will this help facilitate student learning in reading, writing and arithmetic?"

One minor digression at this point. While few would disagree with the statement that schools should be both satisfying and productive for both students and staff, many have the mistaken notion that you can't be both satisfying and at the same time productive. We found that the schools that are the most productive are also the same schools in which students and staff are most satisfied.

3. *Instructional Leadership.* Instructionally effective and ineffective schools differ in the nature and level of instructional leadership present. In the effective schools, the teachers recognize that someone is in charge. In our work in the elementary schools, usually the principal is clearly recognized as the instructional leader. What are some of the functions of an effective instructional leader? The instructional leader interprets the school's mission to the staff; provides guidance, support and encouragement to both students and staff; serves as a communication link to both parents and staff and perhaps most important, engages in continuous monitoring of pupil progress relative to achievement of the priority skills.

Those familiar with the research on the role and functioning of the principal are aware that some principals do not see themselves as the leader of the "technical core" (curriculum and instructional program) of school. While I can imagine that the instructional leadership might come from someone other than the principal, in our studies of elementary schools, either the principal provides the instructional leadership or no one seems to.

Again returning to our research, we found that in the improving schools, the principal was much more likely to be an instructional leader, be more assertive in the leadership role, and perhaps most crucial, assumed responsibility for the frequent evaluation of the achievement of basic goals and objectives.

The role of the principal as a facilitator of communication between and among staff is significant. We have been consistently amazed at the relatively small amount of professional conversation that occurs among the staff in a school. It appears that some educational benefits could be forthcoming if teachers talked to other teachers about teaching, the curriculum, etc.

4. *Opportunities to Learn.* To state the obvious, students seem to perform best on tasks which they have had the greatest opportunity to learn and practice. Opportunity to learn is one of the factors which differentiates between effective and less effective schools. Blom and Carroll's *Mastery Learning Model* illustrates the importance of student learning opportunities (e.g., time on task). The research on the Mastery Learning Models when coupled with effective schools research confirms the importance of student learning time.

Two observations are in order here: (1) the press of events on the classroom make it easy for teachers to lose sight of the actual amount of time being devoted to direct instruction and (2) in the absence of clear goals, teachers devote more time to those activities they value. Unfortunately the teacher's values may not be consistent with those of the policy makers (state or local).

Our research in the improving schools revealed that teachers, in the main, tended to overestimate the amount of time devoted to direct instruction in basic skills. This observation held for both improving and declining schools. I should hasten to add that the actual time devoted to basic skills instruction, though overestimated, was higher in the improving schools.

Urban life is complex and urban school life is equally complex. Teachers are constantly diverting direct instructional time toward managing these complexities (e.g., sending students to the Title I reading teacher, etc.) at the expense of in-class, on-task instructional time. An urban elementary teacher we interviewed this spring said, "We (the schools) have got to do it, if we don't, these kids won't have a chance. For many of my kids the schools are their last hope." This teacher needs all the instructional time she can get and she was careful to point out that she selects and screens the events which serve to detract from instructional time such as movies and assemblies. Her kids "don't always go." In my opinion, we educators would be well advised to inventory the school experience because I think we have made some bad time/event allocations.

The second observation teachers emphasize on that which they value is particularly troublesome. As one researcher stated, the teacher is the final and real policy maker in education. Official policy mandates to the contrary, when the individual teacher closes the classroom door the functional definitions of quality education and equality of educational opportunity begin to operate. Let me offer one example. I would imagine that you, like me, are committed to equality of educational opportunity, but in the practical terms of the classroom, what does that mean? Our research tells us that there are at least two classroom operational definitions. First, some teachers believe the term means treating all kids the same; second, other teachers believe that it means treating all kids in a manner fitting to their needs. If you think about the different instructional consequences such as time on task implied by these different "teacher policies" you can see why we need to be concerned about how teachers use time and structure learning opportunities for students.

The central position of the teacher in the teaching and learning process is sufficient to justify the importance of teacher education, both pre and inservice. The policies, priorities and appropriate teacher practices must be reinterpreted to teachers again and again.

5. *Home School Support Systems.* With the realization that schools are social systems should come the realization that students are also members of other social systems. For most students, especially elementary students, the home and family social system is critical since it provides a major component of education and socialization for the student. It is clearly counter-productive to debate whether one is more important than another in teaching basic skills. It is significant to recognize the vast differences in home and family social systems. As with most educators, I wish that all students came to the schools with the "prerequisite skills and experiences" so that our instructional approaches didn't require major adaptations. The hard, cold reality is that these differences do exist and we can – we must – make the adjustment necessitated by them.

The effective schools research confirms that parents do play a critical role in assisting the schools in achieving their educational goals. Unfortunately, the literature on effective schools and parent participation models is unclear regarding the forms and levels of parent participation that are desirable and necessary. We hope to provide more insight into the parent participation dimension in our future work.

It seems fair to say that high levels of parent involvement and support makes the instructional tasks easier. On the other hand, some of the effective schools have been able to meet their goals and objectives with what appears to be nominal rather than extraordinary levels of parent involvement. The key seems to be the school staff's willingness to utilize parent interests and involvement in a systematic way. For example, a research colleague reported on a study where urban teachers told the parents that their children would be given a ten minute homework assignment each day. The teachers asked for parent assistance, it was forthcoming and the program was a success. The key to the program's success revolved around the fact that the teachers said (1) it's only supposed to take ten minutes, and (2) stop after ten minutes because if the child can't finish in ten minutes, *I (the teacher) have made a mistake in teaching the concept or estimating time required.*

In summary, the research describing schools that have been shown to be unusually effective in providing education for poor and minority students is important because the research documents that such schools exist – this, in and of itself is reason to be optimistic, and the characteristics of these effective schools make sense and can be replicated in all urban schools. The effective schools research should serve to motivate all urban educators.

Policy – Program Recommendations

As I indicated at the outset, I believe that the Connecticut Board of Education has

initiated or will soon be initiating a number of reforms and innovative programs which are moving in the right direction. Those of you who are much more familiar with the Board's program than I may feel that the Board of Education has already responded to all the suggestions implied by the effective schools research. Based on my reading of the background materials I have concluded that some new policy formulations or policy modifications would serve the interests of urban schools. The following section is organized around general policy issues which cut across many policy program areas and specific policy issues which are more closely tied to one or more of the Board's current policies or programs.

1 *General Policy Issues*

In my judgement, the current policies and programs of the Department of Education fail to recognize that the individual schools are powerful social systems with norms, beliefs and values which serve to sustain the social system. If the State Board of Education hopes to improve urban education, it must realize that, in large measure, the task is that of redirecting the social system of the individuals schools.

The concept of building level social systems rests on the assumptions that (1) educational problems are local problems which must ultimately be solved locally, and (2) all members of a social system must be involved in and committed to modifying the social system. These two assumptions place the burden of educational reform where it belongs and with those who must participate in the change process. First, the *building* should become the strategic unit for accountability and reform. The planning processes so evident in the current activities of the Board should ultimately result in carefully developed *building* level plans. State and district-level needs assessments should ultimately yield *building* level needs assessments. Technical assistance programs and staff development efforts should be cast so that they represent technical assistance to the *building* and that inservice programs are designed for the whole professional staff of the *building*. Assessments of educational performance should be communicated in terms of *building* level indicators.

If the building level social system concept were incorporated into the Board's efforts, one of the outcomes could be the identification of Connecticut urban schools that are instructionally effective in meeting the educational needs of their students. Such schools could be publicly recognized by the State Board and/or the local board. Such recognition would serve as a powerful reinforcer to those staff and also serve to illustrate, by concrete example, that schools can make a difference. A second outcome would be the identification of schools that are less effective. Since the level of available technical assistance is limited, the decisions about priorities with respect to the allocation of available technical assistance could be targeted to the schools with the greatest need.

Under the leadership of Dr. John Porter, the Michigan Department of Education has designed a program which targets resources and technical assistance to "high need" schools. The

evaluation of this program has not been completed but the general impression is that the program is effective. The targeted "high need" schools are responsive to the opportunity to become actively involved in a building level program designed to produce positive change. I am sure that the Michigan Department of Education staff would welcome an opportunity to describe this program – its success and failures.

2. *Specific Policy Issues*

In the following section I have singled out specific policies, programs or practices which can be considered separately and do not presume recognition of the building level social system concept.

A. *Mission of the Schools*

When the Comprehensive Plan for Elementary and Secondary is completed, the State of Connecticut will have a set of statewide goals for education, stated in student attainment terms (product goals) as well as program and administration goals (processes). The "process" and "product" goals will go a long way toward operationally defining the mission of schools in the state.

I recommend that when these goal statements have been adopted the Board implement a dissemination program designed to insure that every professional K-12 educator as well as the general citizenry in the state are aware of these goals. Furthermore, I recommend that the state take leadership in asking each local district to engage in a self-study process. The self-study process should at minimum, seek to determine whether current curriculur content and instructional program are properly aligned with these goals; and whether local educational units (school districts or individual buildings) believe it is reasonable to expect that *all* students can achieve the product goals with what level of expected proficiency and when; and what additional curricular materials, inservice training and technical assistance needs to be brought on line so as to increase the likelihood that the product goals will be achieved by all students.

I am disappointed to see that Connecticut's assessment plan, with the exception of the ninth grade, delegates the authority to select achievement tests to the local districts. My concern is based on the fact that the standardized norm referenced tests currently available and likely to be selected will differ dramatically relative to their congruence with state goals. Professor Andrew Porter and his associates at Michigan State University have conducted a careful analysis of the content of the most popular norm referenced tests to measure fourth grade math. His findings clearly demonstrate that different tests measure different skills with different degrees of emphasis.

I would recommend that the Department of Education conduct a similar content analysis of the tests mostly likely to be selected for use by the local districts. I'm confident such an analysis will convince the State Board of Education that the tests emphasized

different contents and skills and that local boards of education should select their assessment instruments from a defined list. If this is not done, classroom teachers will be confused about teaching the explicit objectives implied by the state goals or the implicit objectives embedded in the assessment instruments.

I am also concerned about the ninth grade EERA assessment. I would feel much more comfortable if the common assessment occurred earlier in the educational process. It seems to me that waiting until the ninth grade places a disproportionate amount of the "remedial" responsibility on the secondary schools while relieving a disproportionate amount of responsibility from the earlier levels.

B. *Efficacy and Expectations*

While some of the background materials I reviewed mentioned the need for inservice education and continuing professional development, I did not see a clear program outlined. I recommend that the Board of Education implement a comprehensive program once the new "product goals" are adapted and widely disseminated. The improvement of urban education will occur – if it occurs at all – if the current teachers and administrators continue to improve their individual and collective practices.

The State Board should set as one of its goals that every educator in the state has a clear sense of their role and each believes he or she has the knowledge and skills required to successfully discharge that role. This is no small undertaking but the individual educator's sense of efficacy is at the very center of the improvement process. Further, the State Board of Education needs to know if members of the educational enterprise believe that, for whatever reason (good or bad) they don't feel they can do the job they are expected to do.

C. *Instructional Leadership*

Effective leadership is needed at all levels in the educational heirarchy. I am especially concerned about instructional leadership evidenced by building level administrators. I did not see much attention devoted to training (pre or inservice) for building level administrators in the materials I received. While I recognize that the selection and subsequent evaluation of building level administrators is clearly the prerogative of the local school districts, I believe the state should provide some opportunity for continued professional development of leadership skills. I recommend that the State Board, in cooperation with institutions of higher education, establish programs of inservice for the instructional leaders of the schools. The Board may wish to establish leadership programs which take the form of a leadership center where school administrators could come together and participate in workshops, seminars, discussion groups, etc., or even consider some sort of continuing certification program which would encourage each administrator to develop individual plans for their continued professional growth and development.

I would encourage the Board to consider using practicing administrators as a valuable resource for any programs designed for administrative development. For example, the principals in instructionally effective elementary schools would represent an excellent and credible training resource for other elementary school principals.

D. *Opportunities to Learn*

Variations in the delivery of instruction in individual buildings and classrooms make it difficult for state-level policies to impact on the learning opportunities dimension in any coherent manner. Probably the most significant role that state policy can play in this area is to recognize its importance and encourage local educators to develop ways of monitoring their own delivery systems.

There is one issue that relates to "learning opportunities" that should be of concern to state-level policy makers. The issue is particularly important for urban schools because of the number of categorical programs (e.g., Title I) present in those schools. In our study of "improving" and "declining" schools we observed that the presence of categorical programs adds a level of complexity to the "learning opportunities" dimension. We observed that the instructional planning for students eligible for both regular and categorical programs often means that several individuals (e.g., reading teachers) in addition to the students' regular classroom teacher are involved in prescribing the students' learning opportunities. The various instructional personnel often lack information about the students' overall instructional experiences, nor is it clear who is responsible for the students' experiences. In order to minimize this problem, I would recommend that the State Board take steps to insure that the building level program planning integrates the learning opportunities included in both regular and categorical programs. I believe that such program integration would result in real efficiencies in the learning opportunities for the affected students.

E. *Home School Support Systems*

In spite of the confusion that exists in the research literature regarding parent involvement, its forms and levels, some issues seem clear. First, parents are concerned about their children's school experiences and therefore it only makes good practical sense that school personnel maintain communications with parents. The communication systems should be designed around the student's progress vis-a-vis the state's educational goals. Second, some parents or other adults want to be involved more directly in the delivery of instruction such as volunteers and tutors. These adults represent a resource for expanding both learning opportunities and time on task. In this sense they may be viewed as "adjunct instructional personnel."

The State Board of Education, through its technical assistance programs, should help local districts design and implement programs which serve to communicate with

parents and where feasible, utilize parents as adjunct instructional personnel. A number of well grounded models exist and should be reviewed in preparing for this additional technical assistance function.

Summary

Education has been described as a "soft technology" which means that it's difficult or impossible to specify precisely how it must be "done" to be effective. Education has been described as a "long link technology" which means that many institutions (federal, state and local) are impacting on it. Unfortunately, because the "technology of education" is both "soft" and imported from a "distance" it is difficult to ensure that what is intended actually occurs as intended in the buildings and classrooms. Nevertheless this is in the nature of education in this country and we must accept this reality and continue to struggle with it as we seek to improve the educational delivery systems.

I am absolutely convinced that the low levels of educational achievement characteristic of our urban schools can be improved. I am also convinced that the suggestions I have made would, if implemented, move us toward our goal of equity and excellence in education. I sincerely hope that my paper, and those prepared by the other invited participants, will serve to assist the State Board of Education and result in program improvements that will accrue to the benefit of all the state's students, but especially the students served by the state's urban schools.